Elections in California

California law requires that all candidates for a voter-nominated office be listed on the same ballot. Voter-nominated offices are state legislative offices, U.S. congressional offices, and state constitutional offices.

In both the open primary and general elections, you can vote for any candidate, regardless of what party preference you indicated on your voter registration form. In the primary election, the two candidates receiving the most votes—regardless of party preference—move on to the general election regardless of vote totals. If a candidate receives a majority of the vote (50 percent + 1), a general election still must be held. Even if there are only two candidates for an office in the open primary, a general election for that office is still required.

California’s open primary system does not apply to candidates running for U.S. President, county central committee, or local offices.

California law requires the following information to be printed in this notice.

Voter-Nominated Offices

Political parties are not entitled to formally nominate candidates for voter-nominated offices at the primary election. A candidate nominated for a voter-nominated office at the primary election is the nominee of the people and not the official nominee of any party at the general election. A candidate for nomination to a voter-nominated office shall have his or her party preference, or lack of party preference, stated on the ballot, but the party preference designation is selected solely by the candidate and is shown for the information of the voters only. It does not mean the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party designated, or that there is an affiliation between the party and candidate, and no candidate nominated by the voters shall be deemed to be the officially nominated candidate of any political party. In the county sample ballot booklet, parties may list the candidates for voter-nominated offices who have received the party’s official endorsement.

Any voter may vote for any candidate for a voter-nominated office, if they meet the other qualifications required to vote for that office. The top two vote-getters at the primary election move on to the general election for the voter-nominated office even if both candidates have specified the same party preference designation. No party is entitled to have a candidate with its party preference designation move on to the general election, unless the candidate is one of the two highest vote-getters at the primary election.

Nonpartisan Offices

Political parties are not entitled to nominate candidates for nonpartisan offices at the primary election, and a candidate at the primary election is not the official nominee of any party for the specific office at the general election. A candidate for nomination to a nonpartisan office may not designate his or her party preference, or lack of party preference, on the ballot. The top two vote-getters at the primary election move on to the general election for the nonpartisan office.